The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Eugene B. Konecci, professor, management, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
EUGENE B. KONECCI

Professor Eugene B. Konecci passed away on November 19, 1992. He was a space pioneer, dedicated educator, and advocate of technology venturing. He held high-level positions in the federal government, aerospace industry, and air force, in addition to a triple professorship in The University of Texas System.

He earned a bachelor of science degree in chemistry and biology from Roosevelt University in Chicago and a doctorate in medical physiology from the University of Bern, Switzerland. He also did graduate work at the University of Chicago and received special training at the USAF Air Command and Staff School and the Atomic Commission's Institute of Nuclear Studies at Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Konecci's experience with aircraft began during World War II, when he joined the army air corps while a student at Clemson College, South Carolina. In 1950, he joined the air force as chief of physiology and toxicology and he also worked in the Inspector General’s Office as development engineering inspector for weapons systems. He had assignments in space medicine, radiobiology, and physiology-biophysics at the School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. While serving in the United States Air Force, he was head of the Isotope Laboratories and he was the logistics control and supply control officer for the radio biological department, which ran projects in the Pacific and Nevada Nuclear Test Ranges, Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Balcones Research Center at The University of Texas.

In the 1950s, Dr. Konecci was head of Douglas Aircraft Company’s life sciences activities and he was involved in several programs such as Thor, Nike-Zeus, Skybolt, Saturn IV, DC-8, DC-9, and manned space systems. His life sciences organization was an interdisciplinary group of engineers, physical scientists, and biomedical specialists who performed man-machine system analysis and research.

The executive vice president of Douglas Aircraft, Arthur Raymond, selected Dr. Konecci to serve on the company’s Advanced Planning Space Committee in 1957. This top management committee spent more than a year conducting an extensive survey of the market and the research-and-development potentials in the new space field. The resulting comprehensive plan recommended management changes and the construction of facilities and laboratories to enable the company to become competitive in this field. One of the prime goals of the committee was to educate company management executives about space. Dr. Konecci coauthored a space primer to give them an understanding of the fundamentals of this new complex field.

Dr. Konecci participated in the early plans for NASA and served from 1962 to 1964 as director of NASA’s Biotechnology and Human Research Office in Washington. He also served as a senior professional staff member of the President's National Aeronautics and Space Council and as chief advisor to President Lyndon Johnson on the United States space program. When Dr. Konecci joined The University of Texas in 1966, he was a senior professional staff member of the President’s Space Council. The council, under the chairmanship of the vice president, is directly responsible to the President of the United States for overseeing the nation’s space and aeronautics programs. Dr. Konecci’s prime responsibility was to cover the manned space flight programs, which included the planning, management, budgeting, research and development, coordination, facilities, and administrative operations of several organizations: (1) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s present and future manned programs such as Gemini, Apollo, space stations, lunar bases, and interplanetary flight; (2) the Department of Defense’s manned-orbiting laboratories and lifting-body programs;
(3) the Atomic Energy Commission’s nuclear propulsion and Snap projects for use in manned systems; (4) the State Department’s planning and coordination of the use of space as an instrument of international policy; and (5) aeronautics research for both the NASA and the FAA supersonic transport systems.

In 1962 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration recognized his talents and asked him to form a new program called Human Factors Systems. His responsibilities included identification and application of features of the manned aerospace programs to commercial and private enterprises and other government agencies. The man-machine systems approach, which has proven to be so effective in the aerospace program, is one of Dr. Konecci’s areas of great achievement. He planned and organized several successful conferences and symposia in and out of government, including the American Astronautical Society’s Goddard Memorial Symposium, "Space Age in the Fiscal Year 2001," and the National Cybernetics Conference, "Ecological Technology in Space, Earth-Sea," at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

Konecci was renowned internationally for his man-machine system research and management planning of several successful programs in diverse fields such as cabin systems, space systems, space cabin design, ecological systems, biological warfare, information systems, and biomedical research.

He was a fellow of the American Astronautical Society and was elected president in May 1968. He was a pioneer in aerospace research and development and was appointed as an advisor to the Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum.

Konecci held UT Austin professorships in management in the Graduate School of Business and in aerospace engineering in the College of Engineering, as well as a professorship in bioengineering at The University of Texas Medical School in San Antonio. Upon his appointment to the University, Chancellor Harry Ransom stressed the cross-disciplinary nature of Dr. Konecci’s past and future work. Ransom stated, "We plan to accelerate our rate of interdisciplinary teaching and research activities at the University by bringing back people like Dr. [George] Kozmetzky and Dr. Konecci to the academic ranks to help us achieve our goals. The space program has stimulated new system approaches and given us a wealth of new technology. We at The University of Texas plan to capitalize on these by a transference program from our nation’s aerospace efforts to achieve the greatest benefits for mankind. The University of Texas is a natural place for such cross-disciplinary technological transference."

In January 1967, one year after he joined the UT faculty, Dr. Konecci was named the first holder of the Kleberg-King Ranch Professorship established by the King Ranch family. Unlike endowed professorships that are associated with a particular department or field of research, the Kleberg professorship may be designated for different UT departments from year to year. B. K. Johnson of Kingsville, a trustee of the Kleberg Fund, said the professorship was established "to aid the University in attracting eminent educators and scientists who will have an impact on the campus and upon the state of which the University will be proud to share." The Alice G. K. Kleberg Professorship was converted into an endowed professorship in 1983 as the Kleberg-King Ranch Professorship in Management. Dr. Konecci held the professorship until his death.

He also served as director of a project on “transference of aerospace technology” directed toward ecological problems, health maintenance, and biomedical instrumentation, some of the most important aspects of the manned space programs. Some of his other research dealt with the marine resources of Texas coastal waters and problems of living underwater for long periods of time.

In addition to his other responsibilities, Dr. Konecci became special assistant to Chancellor Ransom at The University of Texas System level, director of research for the Graduate School of Business, and director of the Research Center for Management of Technical and Intellectual Resources. After several years of these multiple program activities, Dr. Konecci began to concentrate on graduate student instruction and course development, with an emphasis on Management of New Enterprises; Management of Technology; Management of Large Scale Complexes, Business, Government, and Society; and Biotechnology, Agribusiness, and Resource Management. Gene was among the founding faculty of the IC² Institute.

Dr. Konecci supervised hundreds of graduate students who received their MBA degrees. Many of their projects led to job opportunities and new business ventures, and many of his former students are now leaders in business and government.
During the last years of his career, Dr. Konecci was the director of business plan development for the Center for Technology Venturing. This entailed organizing and conducting conferences and workshops around the state of Texas with entrepreneurs and assisting them in implementing ideas into feasible business plans.

Dr. Konecci was a unique interdisciplinary individual. He was a renaissance man who combined a classical background in scientific, technical, and biomedical disciplines with a wide array of real world experience that spanned 38 years in program management, research, development, policy, and business. In the truest sense he became a manager of intellectual, technological, energy, and economic resources. Dr. Konecci's extensive experience in business and government program management, including science and technology, served as the foundation for planning-programming and budgeting, staffing, implementing, and operating a number of aerospace, military-industrial complex projects and programs, in addition to a number of biomedical and healthcare-related activities. His many years of formal and informal academic and real world experience in multiple fields is applicable to today's complex and sophisticated needs in managing human, technological, ecological, environmental, energy, and economic resources that dramatically affect business, government, and societal interrelationships and our national and international well-being.

Professor Konecci's widow Hana, and his two sons, Paul and Jan, survive him.

This memorial resolution was prepared by Professor James A. Fitzsimmons.

Distributed to the Dean of the Red McCombs School of Business, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on January 5, 2001. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.